

**Wisconsin**

# Department of Natural Resources

# NEWS

November 19, 2005

## SPECIAL EDITION

### 2005 Opening Day

### Gun Deer Season Report

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#### **'Ideal conditions' and 'lots of big bucks' highlight 2005 deer season opener**

MADISON – Hunting conditions that “don’t get any better than this” around most of Wisconsin and reports of lots of larger bucks with excellent antler development -- especially in areas of the state that had Earn-A-Buck requirements last year -- were early indications of a memorable opening day for the 2005 Wisconsin nine-day gun deer hunting season.

Paul Samerdyke, Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist for Waushara County registering deer in Wild Rose reported he had already registered “a few ‘deer-of-a-lifetime’ in the morning” and more were coming in.

Conditions in northeastern Wisconsin were “about as good as you can get. It was cool, it was calm, there was snow cover, the deer were moving. No one had any complaints about the conditions.” Samerdyke said. He registered one “really huge 17 pointer, a few 12- and 14-pointers and a lot of eight pointers.”

Similar reports came in from other areas across the southern two-thirds of the state.

DNR wildlife manager Dale Katsma said the registration station in Dundee, located in the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest just inside Fond du Lac County, was very busy.

“We’ve seen a lot of nice 2-year-old bucks and many hunters, young and old, with their first deer or first buck,” he said.

Bob Michelson, DNR West Central Region wildlife supervisor, reported conditions were excellent. There was light snow cover, comfortable temperatures and it was calm. People working registration stations were saying deer were coming in a little ahead of normal, because it was relatively warm and they wanted to get their deer to the processor. Everyone he spoke with reported seeing lots of deer and stations were registering a lot of older bucks, including several that would be mounted.

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Reports from the north indicated things were a bit slower. Although the opening day “was beautiful – one of the best opening days I’ve experienced in years,” Jim Bishop, DNR Northern Region public affairs manager, reported that the heavy snow that had fallen earlier in the week was melting and dropping off young maples and aspen early this morning onto anyone walking beneath. The snow had brought down branches trees in some areas, so some hunters had to cut their way into stands, he said.

Much of the northern portion of the state was also closer to deer population goals, compared to the south, where deer were still over goal in many deer management units, so some registration stations in the north reported activity seemed slower.

DNR hunter safety administrator Tim Lawhern working in Juneau County reported “absolutely perfect hunting weather. There’s tracking snow, I am hearing lots of shooting. Hunter spirits high – everyone I talk to is happy and excited. This is absolutely THE perfect day to go deer hunting. Good visibility. If I could send a message to deer hunters today I’d say enjoy the great weather and have a good time. But remember safety basics – be absolutely sure of your target and what’s behind it and remember safe gun handling, just like we taught you in hunter education.”

Hunters also reported that buck deer appeared to still be in rut, or in their mating season, in many locations. Hunters reported seeing scrapes in the dirt and rubs on trees, indicating bucks were still marking territory and several bucks were registered with recent antler damage, indicating they had been sparring with other bucks.

Along with good numbers of bucks, wildlife biologists also reported hunters were bringing in good number of antlerless deer as well. Wildlife managers said it appeared there were a lot of hunters interested in pre-qualifying for Earn-A-Buck if it should return next year so they were bringing in good numbers of antlerless and yearling deer.

Earn-A-Buck rules require hunters to shoot an antlerless deer in order to earn the right to shoot an antlered deer. The rule was in place last year in some deer management units that have been well over their population goals for several years. There was no Earn-A-Buck in place in non-chronic wasting disease (CWD) zones this year, but the state Natural Resources Board has indicated it may consider it again next year if not enough antlerless deer are registered in overpopulated deer units.

Wildlife officials conducting CWD monitoring reported a lot of cooperation from hunters in their efforts to collect samples from deer for testing. Samples are being collected from within the current CWD management zones and this year, also from areas in the DNR Northeast Region as part of a monitoring effort to make sure the disease is not spreading outside of established zones.

“The only people who haven’t wanted to give (samples) are those who shot trophy bucks and who plan to hang them on the wall,” Samerdyke said. He also noted a lot of hunters were interested in being able to enter a drawing for a gun that is being sponsored by Whitetails Unlimited and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Everyone who submits a sample is entered into the drawing.

“In the heart of the CWD management zones in Iowa County, hunters were bringing in many large bucks. Greg Matthews, DNR South Central Region public affairs manager estimated that they would register in the neighborhood of 200 deer for the day at the Barneveld station. He reported that registrations were brisk at other registrations stations around the western CWD zone.

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At Barneveld only about one in five deer brought in were does – well below the suggested minimum two does to one buck ratio wildlife biologists say is needed to continue reducing populations.

Samerdyke also reported workers at the Wild Rose registration station experienced a first: “a buck deer ran right through the registration station parking lot this morning while we had a lot of people in registering deer. We’ve never seen that before.”

By late afternoon, DNR law enforcement officials had been notified of two hunting-related incidents and were assisting in investigating. In Grant County, a youth was conveyed to a hospital with an apparent self-inflicted wound. In Burnette County, a 66-year-old male was killed in a hunting incident; no further details were available.

### ***Deer license sales pick up in last days before opener***

MADISON, – If license sales are any indication of how excited hunters are for the gun deer season that began today, hunters are eager.

A total of 631,919 gun deer licenses were issued through Friday, the eve of the 2005 gun deer season. That compares to 639,687 (within 1 percent) sold by the same time last year, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

The sales this past week have been truly remarkable,” said Diane Brookbank, director of the agency’s Bureau of Customer Service and Licensing. “Sales on Thursday and Friday this past week exceeded the 2004 daily sales by over 18 percent each day.” Sales were brisk on Friday, with 69,573 or 11 percent of the total gun deer licenses sales to date. Sales activity peaked at 174 licenses sold per minute per minute.

So far, 19,509 or 3 percent of all gun deer licenses were issued via the Internet, which the DNR reports as the single highest sales location.

Brookbank reminds hunters that they now have the convenient option of purchasing their license during the season, so the total number of deer licenses sold for 2005 will increase through the season. Last year, 10,268 licenses were issued after the season opener, bringing the 2004 total sales to 649,955.

An additional 5,864 permits that authorize hunting in the Chronic Wasting Disease Eradication Zones have also been issued this year.

About 95 percent of the gun deer licenses – 598,094 – were sold to Wisconsin residents, with the remainder sold to nonresidents from every state in the U.S. and 16 foreign countries. The highest number of nonresident purchases came from Minnesota (15,228), Illinois (8,856), Michigan (1,081), Florida (952), and Iowa (776).

Women represented 7.5 percent of total gun deer hunters. Another 12 percent were young hunters age 12 to 17.

Hunters wishing to purchase a deer hunting license can visit one of the more than 1,450 licensing agents statewide (locations are noted on DNR’s Internet) or can select telephone (1-877-945-4236) or web sales options but will have to select special Fed Ex delivery. Visit the DNR Web site <[dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)> for more information; select the Licenses, Permits and Registrations option.

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## **DNR NORTHERN REGION**

### **ASHLAND COUNTY**

**Ashland** - Gina at Pearce's Sausage Kitchen reported it was "kinda warm, overcast and in the 40s at noon, had about two inches of snow this morning but it's melting. We've registered about a dozen but this is the first year for us registering for gun season so folks don't know about us."

### **BARRON COUNTY**

**Cumberland** - Kathy at The Country Store said it has been pretty steady, mostly bucks - about 25 so far. It seemed a bit warm for hunting, with a little bit of snow melting on the streets. One hunter brought in a buck with a single antler and one young girl hunting with her dad brought in a nice doe - her first hunt, her first deer. Her dad was at least as excited as the daughter!

### **BARRON COUNTY**

**Cumberland** - Randy McDonough, DNR wildlife technician at Cumberland Holiday, reported a steady flow of deer coming in - about 50 by mid-day. There've been quite a few nice bucks in the 10- to 11-point class. All deer registered look healthy. There was snow on the ground and temperatures in the 30s. It was a little breezy but hunters were saying conditions are good. "We registered a buck this morning that had two white front feet," McDonough said.

### **BAYFIELD COUNTY**

**Cable** - Dave at Cable Sport Shop said this is the first year for this registration station but the day started out hot. Dave said he opened up at 6:30 a.m. and had hunters bringing in deer right away at 7:30 a.m. Hunters were saying hunting conditions were good in the Cable area with a bit of snow on the ground, temperatures in the mid-30s and a gentle breeze. Similar to a station out of Cumberland, Dave also reported registering a one-antlered buck. About mid-morning a young hunter about 14 years old came in with his dad. Both had bucks but the youngster had the bigger one.

### **BURNETT COUNTY**

**Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area** - Paul Peterson, wildlife technician at Crex Meadows, said registration was brisk at this station with 67 deer registered as of mid-afternoon. Peterson was seeing lots of nice bucks and hunters were saying they're seeing lots of deer. The day started out with 1 to 2 inches of wet snow on the ground but that had melted off by afternoon. The temperature was mild with no wind. Peterson felt that a lot of hunters were still in the woods and that registration would stay strong through the early evening hours as people left the woods

### **FLORENCE COUNTY**

**Florence** - Chuck McCollough, DNR wildlife biologist at Picard's Black Bear Inn, said he was expecting a conservative hunt this season as his area experienced some winterkill that reduced deer numbers. He emphasized that while on a statewide basis the deer herd is over-populated, there are some pockets, like his, where herds are at or below population goals. He'd only registered and aged a few deer by early afternoon. There were several inches of snow, and temperatures were in the low to mid-30s. The main weather-related complaint from hunters was that melting snow was dripping on them from tree branches.

### **LANGLADE COUNTY**

**Antigo** - Eric Borchert, wildlife biologist at the DNR Service Center, said registrations had been relatively steady since mid-morning. Borchert felt the pace was a little below last year but he tempered that with the observation that conditions were near perfect and that there was no rush to get out of the woods. It was cool enough that there was no concern about meat spoiling and with the exception of hanging snow reducing visibility to 40 yards in places, conditions were great. He was seeing nice antler development on yearlings and he reported that hunter attitudes were great and people were enthusiastic about going hunting.

**ONEIDA COUNTY** - Jim Bishop, DNR Northern Region public affairs manager, said opening day "was beautiful - one of the best opening days I've experienced in years." He said it was easy to see the way to his stand early this morning because a thin cloud cover reflected diffused light as the sun came up. "It almost looked phosphorescent - just beautiful," he said. One minor difficulty he experienced was that the heavy snow that had fallen earlier this week was now dropping off young maples and aspen onto anyone walking beneath, which made for some temporary discomfort. Some hunters had to cut their way in to a few areas, he said. Temperatures this morning soon reached the 40s, so snow slipped off the trees and the wet going diminished as the morning went on. Bishop said he was able to spend four hours on his stand about 8 miles south of the Willow Flowage without having to head to deer camp to warm up. He and his other hunting partners saw few deer, reasoning that the deer had had a good night of feeding and were "hunkered down" as morning arrived.

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## **VILAS COUNTY**

**St. Germain** - Connie at St. Germain Sport Marine said things seemed kind of slow with 31 bucks and 12 does registered mid-day but she added that the hunters she'd talked to said it was real comfortable out there and no one was rushing to get in from the woods. Several that had come in to buy additional bonus tags said their party would be coming in when hunting hours closed. Three of the bucks registered were first bucks for young hunters and she knew that there were still a bunch of first-year hunter education graduates out on their first hunts that had yet to come in. She had to put down the phone to take a photo of a buck for their "buck board."

## **WASHBURN COUNTY**

**Minong** - Andy, forestry technician at Minong Ranger Station, reported that registration was ahead of last year. At 2 p.m. they'd registered 52 bucks and 30 antlerless deer compared to a total of 52 deer for the entire day last year. He reported that a couple hunters came in to say that they felt this was the best opener in terms of conditions in several years. They also mentioned that they were a little warm as they'd just spent nearly four hours dragging in their two deer. While Andy was on the phone, another phone at his registration station rang with the caller saying they would be bringing in a 21-point buck later in the day. Hunters also reported that they were seeing fresh scrapes while scouting on Thursday indicating that the rut was still on in the area. The ranger station was doing a steady business selling additional tags.

## **SAWYER COUNTY**

Dan Nordall, a hunter from Harrison, said that he and his hunting partners were not seeing deer around their stands during the morning but that they were getting ready to head out for the late afternoon period in just a few minutes. He said the weather and conditions were good with good visibility and about 2-3 inches of snow on the ground

Jeanne at Hillmans store said this was Hillman's first year as a registration station. As of 3 p.m. they'd registered 22 bucks and 12 does with the first deer of the day coming in at 9 a.m. Many of the bucks were 8-pointers. Hunters coming in were saying that things seem pretty normal and that the snow was melting.

Brittney at Flambeau Forest Inn reported it was still slow at 3 p.m. at the Flambeau Forest Inn with seven deer registered. Folks felt registrations would pick up once hunting hours end. Hunters in the area were saying the woods were wet and they weren't hearing much shooting.

## **DNR NORTHEASTERN REGION**

### **BROWN COUNTY**

**Greenleaf** – Steve Easterly, DNR wildlife technician from Horicon, said the station had a very steady flow and was seeing a lot of big bucks. "Conditions were pretty much ideal. There was a trace of snow on the ground. It was sunny and clear all morning. A few people came in with their first big bucks that they planned on mounting. There have been a lot of big smiles." Easterly said there was a good response to the CWD monitoring effort, with most people who weren't planning on mounting their deer willing to submit heads for sampling. "This has really been a very good opener."

### **CALUMET COUNTY**

**Kiel** – Missy Sparrow, DNR wildlife biologist from Plymouth who was helping out at Mikes Bait and Gun, described the morning by saying "It's just been crazy. We've had a very steady flow with some very nice bucks coming in." The station had registered one 11-pointer and several 10-pointers. Because of the large number of nice bucks, some hunters have been a bit reluctant to submit the heads for CWD sampling, "but a couple of hunters with really nice bucks said they would bring them back for sampling after showing them off to friends and family." Sparrow said most people she's spoken with aren't worried about the disease, but when she explains the need to keep monitoring its spread, they are more willing to submit samples. Sparrow said the weather was beautiful for the opener, with a slight layer of snow on the ground and 35 degrees at sunrise. "I had a lot of people saying they had a very good morning and were seeing lots of deer."

### **DOOR COUNTY**

**Washington Island** -- Robin at Nelson's Hall said although hunting conditions were good, things had been pretty slow. She had only registered 10 deer by 1:30 p.m., including four bucks, one of which was a nice-sized 9-pointer. It seemed to her as though there were fewer hunters on the island than normal. The snow had all melted and she described conditions as wet. Weather was cloudy, overcast and a bit wet from the melting snow.

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**Newport State Park, Jacksonport** - Michele Hefty, a manager at Newport State Park, said although conditions were pretty good, things had been pretty slow. "It wasn't really windy and it was sunny in the morning. We had a couple of inches of snow on the ground and in the woods there was still a little bit by early afternoon," Hefty said. She said mostly smaller bucks had been coming in, including three that were shot within the park, which is open to deer hunting.

#### **FOND DU LAC COUNTY**

**Fond Du Lac** – Tom Hundertmark was registering deer at Dutch's Trading Post. He said hunting conditions for opening day were excellent, partly cloudy, with low winds. The snow had all melted off. By 2 p.m. he had registered 16 doe and 22 bucks. Normally the station registers 40 to 60 for opening day so he was running about even. One big 9-pointer was registered but the rest were younger and smaller. "It's been a mixed bag. Some guys are seeing a lot of deer, others are not. It all depends on where they were hunting."

#### **GREEN LAKE COUNTY**

**Marquette** – Laurie Vaccory, owner of Smokey Joes Bar in rural Marquette, said it had been a busy day. She had registered 69 deer by 2 p.m., which is pretty good for this time of day. She has registered mostly bucks, including one 12-pointer, a couple of 10-pointers and quite a few six- and eight-pointers. She expected things to get very busy later in the day.

#### **KEWAUNEE COUNTY**

**Kewaunee** – Janita Zimmerman at the Center Court Convenience store had registered close to 60 deer, with the first one at 7:55 a.m. "and it's been steady since then." She said she was seeing a big mix, a lot of bucks and a lot of does. "We had one 10-pointer, one nine and a couple of eights. It's been in the mid 30s to 40-degree range. Still a little bit of snow left."

#### **MANITOWOC COUNTY**

**Collins** -- Jeff Pritzl, DNR wildlife biologist for Manitowoc County, had only been working the registration station in Collins since 10 a.m. and had already seen a steady flow of hunters coming in by 12:30 p.m., many with nice bucks, but also with good numbers of antlerless deer. "If we hadn't had the wind this morning conditions would have been perfect," Pritzl said. There was snow was on the ground in the morning but it was virtually gone by noon. A steady 10 to 15 mile-per-hour wind was coming off the lake, but otherwise temperatures were near perfect with clear skies and excellent visibility. Several 3- to 4-year old bucks with excellent rack development were registered before noon, which Pritzl said was early for such nice deer to be registered. A lot of hunters were very interested in pre-qualifying for earn-a-buck so they were bringing in good numbers of antlerless and yearling deer. Hunters were extremely cooperative with the CWD sampling effort. "Folks are more cooperative than I thought they would be. They are clearly supportive of our efforts to monitor for the disease, and they don't seem bothered by any health concerns."

#### **MARINETTE COUNTY**

**Crivitz** – Aaron Buchholz, DNR wildlife biologist from Marinette County, reported that the morning was about perfect. It was warm, close to 40 degrees, but there was snow on the ground. It wasn't windy but it did start to drizzle about noon. Registration was steady, with quite a few older bucks, including one truck in the morning hauling in a 13-, 10-, eight-point and a six-point buck. People were shooting antlerless deer, and most people were willing to submit samples for CWD testing.

#### **MARQUETTE COUNTY**

**Montello** - Jan Banicki, owner of Woods and Goods, reported "things are going exceptionally well. A lot of bucks and a lot of big ones and a lot of extremely happy hunters." She had registered several 12-point bucks with really wide spreads and some that are really thick. Registrations were running about four to one buck to doe. "Some young kids have come in with their first buck. A couple are really excited about it. We've been taking pictures. You couldn't ask for better hunting conditions than we have today. We had fresh snow yesterday, so there was a nice cover. Temperatures were good and it was great."

#### **OCONTO COUNTY**

**Oconto Falls** - James Robaidek, DNR wildlife technician at Oconto County, described conditions as "about as ideal as I've ever seen them for a gun season opener. It was clear, calm, 3 inches of snow at the start, but it was sunny all morning and disappeared fast. Sun was shining until about noon when it began to cloud over. Robaidek said the registration station "has been just hopping all morning with a lot of nice bucks brought in, which was just as we expected because most of the units around here were Earn-A-Buck last year." He had registered a lot of 2 1/2-year-old deer. "Hunters are as happy as they can be." Sampling for CWD was also going very well, he said. "We expected to get 50 CWD samples today and were at 18 by 1 p.m. so we should easily meet our goal."

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## SHAWANO COUNTY

**Pulaski** – Bonnie Ausloos at Pulaski Shell said she had registered 102 deer by 2:30 p.m., a little ahead of usual. “We’re getting lot more bucks than does -- quite a few 10-pointers and quite a few eight-pointers. Hunters seem happy.” Hunting conditions were excellent. Even though there was snow temperatures were moderate and it was clear with good visibility and no precipitation.

**Shawano** – Jean Rombach-Bartels, land division leader for DNR Northeast Region, was working with volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 40 who were helping to register deer at Qualheim’s True Value Store in Shawano. “It’s great because they know a lot of people in the community and are convincing them to help with the CWD sampling. They explain they can take them home to cut off the antlers and then bring the head back tomorrow for sampling, so we’re expecting a lot of them to come in tomorrow.” Rombach-Bartels said a lot more bucks than does had come in, but she expected that to change later in the day. “We expect to have lines out of the parking lot after shooting hours close; we usually do at this station.” She noted the weather was so nice people were just staying in the woods. “There’s no reason for them to get out of the woods. There is snow on the ground. The temperature is great and they are seeing lots of deer. Those hunters who have brought in the big bucks early were all saying they were going back out this afternoon.”

## WAUSHARA COUNTY

**Wild Rose** - Paul Samerdyke, DNR wildlife biologist for Waushara County, said opening day conditions were “about as good as you can get. It was cool, it was calm, there was snow cover, the deer were moving. No one had anything to complain about conditions.” Samerdyke said they were seeing a lot of real large deer brought into the registration station. “A few deer of a lifetime have come in already this morning,” he said. “One really huge 17-pointer, a few 12- and 14-pointers and a lot of eight-pointers.” He had also aged a couple of older does, one 5-year-old and one 6-year-old. Samerdyke said many hunters were filling their antlerless tags. “They don’t want to see us go back to multiple seasons and earn-a-buck.” Samerdyke said registrations had been non-stop since he started at 10 a.m. “Registration levels are as good as I’ve ever seen them here and I’ve worked this station for several years.” CWD sampling had also been going well. “The only people who haven’t wanted to give heads are those who want to hang them. The gun drawing incentive has also helped.” Samerdyke said workers at the registration station also experienced a first: “a buck deer run right through the registration station. We’ve never seen that before.”

## WINNEBAGO COUNTY

**Oshkosh** - Edward Lemke of Tews Two Sporting Goods reported he “heard more shooting today than I have in the last three years.” He had only registered 21 deer by 3 p.m. but they included “a lot of bucks and some very nice ones: nice racks and large deer.” Lemke said hunting conditions were ideal with plenty of snow still on the ground. “You can’t ask for much better than today.” Lemke said some hunters reported seeing a lot of deer while others said they weren’t seeing any. “I guess it all depends on where they were hunting.”

## WAUPACA COUNTY

**Marion** – Steve Hoffman, DNR wildlife biologist for Waupaca County, described opening day conditions as “excellent, as good as you’re going to get.” It was about 20 degrees in the morning with 4 to 5 inches of snow on the ground. There was no wind and visibility was great. Hunters reported that deer were really moving around. Hoffman said they were seeing a lot of real nice bucks being brought in early. They were also seeing quite a few antlerless deer. “I think hunters are really taking advantage of the opportunity to pre-qualify for a buck next year should the earn-a-buck rule come back.” They had already registered a number of 10- to 12-point bucks with large 16- to 18- inch spreads. “Hunters are really happy. They are seeing lots of deer and hearing lots of shooting.” Hoffman, who was collecting samples for CWD testing, said most hunters were more than willing to submit heads for sampling, unless they had a trophy that they were planning on mounting. There was a good response and a lot of interest in the free gun drawing that was going along with the sampling effort.

## DNR SOUTHEAST REGION

Racine and Kenosha counties saw light hunting pressure today. Warden Kevin Mickelberg, working Kenosha Co., said it was difficult to tell it was opening day. Warden Joe Jerich noted that many of the sports shops in Racine County reported that area hunters were heading north to take advantage of the snow cover. “We’ll see hunting pressure increase later in the season when hunters return from the north to hunt deer closer to home,” noted wildlife manager Marty Johnson. Overall, hunters were happy and positive.

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Wildlife manager Tami Ryan and wildlife technician Paul Hainstock attributed positive hunter attitudes this year to simplified hunting regulations and the discontinued Earn-a-Buck requirement. This was echoed throughout the region. Ryan reported that at the Eagle deer registration and CWD sample collection station in Waukesha County, several adult hunters came in with their first deer. Also, hunters were harvesting more bucks than does in the morning hours.

At Big Foot Beach State Park in Walworth County, of the nine deer registered this morning, eight were bucks, and at Wern Valley in Waukesha Co. all 10 deer brought in were bucks. Warden Kyle Drake noted in this part of the state the rut is still strong and is keeping the bucks moving.

Hunting pressure increased farther north in Sheboygan and Washington counties and the Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine. A light cover of snow brought hunters out early in the day. Warden Mark Pearce said the area marshes were frozen and attracting a number of hunters. DNR Wildlife Manager Dale Katsma said the registration station in Dundee, located in the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest just inside Fond du Lac Co., was very busy. "We've seen a lot of nice 2-year-old bucks and many hunters, young and old, with their first deer or first buck." Katsma said one hunting party of a mother and two grown sons all had a deer to register. He said there was very good hunter cooperation in donating heads for CWD sampling. Wardens throughout the Southeast Region, however, noted concern about a high number of baiting violations.

### **KENOSHA COUNTY**

**Kenosha** – Sharyell at Gander Mountain reported deer coming in by lunch time for registration. She said she was registering big deer, particularly big does, and a lot of them. She noted that one "older gentleman" came in with his first deer ever, exclaiming, "It is just beautiful out there." Sharyell has been registering deer throughout the archery season and reports seeing several 12-point bucks, and a number of 8- and 10-pointers, but noted the does have been particularly large and healthy-looking.

### **OZAUKEE COUNTY**

**Grafton** – Sal at Citgo Express said more than a half dozen deer were registered before noon, with hunting conditions sunny and comfortable, but no snow.

**Belgium** – Peter at Royal Avenue Service said he had registered 25 deer by early afternoon, 12 of them does. He said the deer seemed average-sized and healthy. He noted registrations were running behind previous years, but said it was so nice outside and the weather was so beautiful that hunters were undoubtedly not wanting to take time out to register deer.

### **RACINE COUNTY**

**Burlington** – At Berndt's Hide Service, Larry Berndt said he had four very large deer in by lunch, one big healthy doe and two 10-pointers. He noted weather conditions at opening hour were frosty and in the lower 30s, but were sunny and 40s by noon, with a light wind. One woman, self-described "long-time deer hunter," brought in a buck shot in Walworth Co.; she had already donated the head of the 10-pointer for CWD testing. She was pretty proud of her catch, and Berndt kidded with her that he wouldn't tell anyone she had to hit it with her car to get it. The woman laughed loudly and vowed she had shot the deer fair and square. Berndt noted that hunters had donated the head for testing for all but one of the deer he registered.

### **SHEBOYGAN COUNTY**

**Howard's Grove** – Jeff at Howards Grove Meat Market said he got out early to hunt with his son before opening the registration station. He described hunting conditions as "really nice this morning" – high 20s, a light breeze and a dusting of snow on the forest floor. While Jeff didn't get a deer, his 15-year-old son did, a big doe, his third deer since completing hunter education at age 12. Jeff said he had already registered eight antlerless and five bucks by about lunch time. He noted that he has been registering deer in the area longer than any other business, and he predicted registrations would be better than previous years. "Hunters are happy and seeing a lot of deer," he said. He noted he was trying to find someone to take the afternoon shift so he could get back out hunting.

**Glenbeulah** – At Fudgienuckles, Wyonne didn't have a lot of time to talk. She said the restaurant was "loaded with hungry hunters" and she was cooking. By lunch, she had registered 10 deer, eight of them does. She said hunting conditions at opening were sunny and there was light snow that melted later in the morning. She noted that she hadn't heard a lot of hunting stories – that would come at the end of the day, but that this was a big day for her business and she welcomed the hunters.

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## **WALWORTH COUNTY**

**East Troy** - Hunters were lined up into the road, "six or seven cars and really busy" at 1 p.m. at Side View Travel Center, and more than 20 deer had already been registered, 12 of them bucks, with one very large 12-pointer. Paul Hainstock, a DNR wildlife technician from Bong Recreational Center helping collect samples for CWD surveillance, said three-fourths of hunters were donating heads, while the rest were taking their deer to a taxidermist. Hainstock said deer coming were "very big and quite young – very healthy." He said hunters were in very good humor and were having success using deer drives.

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY**

**Hubertus** – At Wally and Bee's Last Stop Resort, Kathy said she had registered 16 deer by early afternoon, about even bucks and does. She noted she had seen some very large deer in the 185-pound range, and had registered a few 10-pointers and a 12-point buck. The latter was taken by a young hunter education graduate out for his first deer season. She said hunters seemed happy, but that deer movement had slowed as temperatures rose through the morning. She noted that for the first time in her life, she registered a three-legged buck. She said the buck appeared to be several years old and the leg wound was well-healed. People there were marveling at how healthy he looked otherwise, she said.

**Kewaskum** – Kathy Brecker at Al's Taxidermy Studio had registered 31 deer by early afternoon and clearly was having a good time doing it. Conditions at opening were slightly windy and "nippy," in the lower 30s. There was tracking snow early, but any snow in direct sun now was melting. She said registrations were running slightly more bucks, with two big 8-pointers, one "very nice" 10-pointer and a number of 7-pointers, each with a broken tine. She said the season seemed to be going fine so far and everyone was happy. She noted that in her area, almost all the deer were being taken on private land, and that she had already registered deer from four women hunters. "In this area, they [women] do that, hunt a lot," she said.

## **WAUKESHA COUNTY**

**Oconomowoc** – Steve at Ox and Cats Sports Grill was in his first year of registering deer, and said he had five deer registered so far today – but many more during archery season. He said three of today's deer were big bucks and others does. Of hunting conditions he said, "It's real nice out there today," but noted a couple hunters had said they had had to pass up big bucks due to Earn-a-buck. He said they were really unhappy when they were told there was no Earn-a-buck this year, obviously shaking his head in amazement that they didn't know. He noted that hunters appeared to be staying out in the woods and they expected registrations and restaurant business to pick up this evening.

## **DNR SOUTH CENTRAL REGION**

### **COLUMBIA COUNTY**

**Cambria** - As of 1:15 p.m. Theresa Nickel said she had registered slightly more than 50 deer at The Dump in Cambria. "Hunters seem pretty happy. We've seen a lot of nice bucks and there's still a little tracking snow, though it is melting fast."

**Wisconsin Dells** - Jim Little at the Citgo Travel Plaza said "we've registered 70 deer so far, that's down just a little from this time in past years, but people seem happy that they don't have to shoot a doe first, so we've gotten a lot more bucks in."

### **CRAWFORD COUNTY**

**Ferryville** - Gail Herfel at the Ferryville Cheese Company said they'd registered more than 50 deer in their first year as a registration station. "The hunters seem to come in in groups. We've registered 15-20 deer in the last 40 minutes." Hunting conditions have been fine, though light sprinkles had started as of 1:45 p.m. "The largest deer we've seen at our station was a nice 12-pointer as well as some really husky does --- pretty good hunting this year."

**Gays Mills** - Kelssi Copus at the Gays Mills Amoco station said they had registered 60-65 so far and had seen a couple of big ones. "My boss, Dave Mageland, buys (instant) film each year and we take pictures of the hunters with big bucks that come in. We post those photos here at the station and offer one to the hunter as well. So far we've taken about 10-15 photos."

### **DANE COUNTY**

**Black Earth** - Reed at the DNR's Black Earth registration station said business had been getting pretty steady starting by about 1:30 p.m.. "We've seen some really nice racks and the hunters seem pretty happy."

(more)

**McFarland** - Bryan Spangler at the True Value Hardware store said registrations were pretty slow. "We've gotten only four deer – two does and two yearlings. Most of the hunters were disappointed that it was so windy down here this morning. They feel that the wind kept the deer from moving around as much and they expected."

**Cottage Grove** - Chris Reinhart said they'd registered 26-30 deer at Stoddard's Country Grove Market. "It's been a busy day and we've seen a lot of good bucks with decent sized racks."

#### **DODGE COUNTY**

**Beaver Dam** – At the Citgo Station, Jana Elgersma said "we've been very busy and have already registered about 50 deer -- awesome hunting conditions this year in this area."

#### **GRANT COUNTY**

**Lancaster** - Sue Clauer at the Angler's Nooks said through 1 p.m. the station had registered 87 deer. Her co-worker Brian said as of 2 p.m. they had registered 200 deer and "we're very busy. We've seen a lot of nice bucks, I'd say that the buck-to-doe ratio in registrations is perhaps 60-40, 70-30 percent. Hunters told us that the deer were easy to see today because of the snow cover."

#### **GREEN COUNTY**

**New Glarus** - Heidi Hayes at Hoesley's Meats said they had registered about 40 deer today, comparable to past years. Hunting conditions were good, but some hunters reported they just did not see that many deer, though a lot of bucks were coming in today.

**Highland** - Bruce Folley said deer registrations were up and that they'd easily registered 100 deer. "Some really nice bucks were coming in. Hunting conditions were just excellent thanks to the snow cover."

#### **IOWA COUNTY**

**Barneveld** - In the heart of the CWD zone in Iowa County, hunters were bringing in many large bucks, according to DNR South Central Region Public Affairs Manager Greg Matthews, who estimated that they would register in the neighborhood of 200 deer for the day. He reported that registrations were brisk at other registrations stations around the western CWD zone. Only about 1 in 5 deer brought to Barneveld were does – well below the suggested minimum two does to one buck ratio wildlife biologists say is needed to continue reducing populations.

**Daleville** – One hunter out early this morning reported seeing a group of nine deer bunched together on the Dane-Iowa county line, then a few minutes later several does. "The deer seemed nervous, but it was good seeing them," he said. He had heard a number of shots early that morning off in the distance at surrounding farmsteads. Conditions were mild with sunshine and about an inch of snow on the ground, but a stiff south breeze was blowing.

#### **LAFAYETTE COUNTY**

**South Wayne** – At 3 p.m. Denny Malott at Holverson's Meat Processing said registrations were down a bit but would pick up later in the afternoon. The station had registered 50 deer so far and hunting conditions are "real good. We've seen some really nice deer, in fact we capped out the last five deer we registered. They ranged from eight- to 13-pointers with an inside rack spread from 17 to 21 inches."

#### **RICHLAND COUNTY**

**Rockbridge** - Jenna Clark at the Natural Bridge Store said nearly 300 deer had been registered, slower than usual. Hunting conditions were very good with snow cover, although rain was starting to fall about 3 p.m. "We've had a lot of nice big bucks, and folks can come see pictures of them," she said. The store takes photos of each hunter and their deer and posts them as soon as they are developed on a board in the store.

#### **ROCK COUNTY**

**Milton** - Pam Coppers at Milton Bait and Tackle said she had registered about 200 deer, about the same as last year. "Hunting conditions were actually a little too warm near the state line, no snow and a bit windy." Coppers said she had seen several big, BIG deer that were well over 200 pounds. One hunter shot two deer – two buck fawns that were running together.

(more)

## **DNR WEST CENTRAL REGION**

### **ADAMS COUNTY**

Keith Warnke, DNR big game biologist, called to say three of four hunters in his camp had harvested bucks by 7:30 a.m. Now they were going to work filling their bonus tags. He said that around his camp in Adams County, the rut was still on and they were seeing lots of bucks moving about. Conditions were near perfect with 5 to 6 inches of snow. The only negative he reported was snow and some ice falling from overhead branches – apparently he's sporting a bit of a scrape between the eyes where some falling ice caught him off guard.

**Monroe Center** – “Hunters had smiles on their faces today,” said Stuart at the Petenwell Sportshop and General Store. He registered 43 deer by 3 p.m. – 11 does and 32 bucks. “One buck came in with a big wide spread, but the antlers were all busted off on one side – not something you see that often,” he said. The damage looked about a week old so maybe the buck had been in a fight, he added. The area started out with snow on the ground this morning but 40-degree temperatures made it to disappear.

### **BUFFALO COUNTY**

**Fountain City** – Twenty deer, including quite a few bucks, had been registered by 2 p.m. Typically at that site registrations pick up significantly by 6 p.m., an employee noted. Temperature was 39 degrees at 2 p.m. with overcast skies.

### **CHIPPEWA COUNTY**

**Holcombe** -- Forty-four deer had been registered at the Lake Holcombe Sportshop by 1 p.m., with a 50-50 split between bucks and does and registration “rush hour” expected later in the day because hunters were saying they were seeing deer. Temperatures were in the 30s and skies were overcast.

### **CLARK COUNTY**

**Greenwood** – Sue Djubenski at KwikTrip said opening day was going well with “deer registrations steady” as of 11 a.m. Hunters were liking the weather with 1.5 inches of snow on the ground and mild temperatures. Hunters also were seeing a lot of deer out and moving around, she said. Among deer registered was an 8-point buck with a 21-inch antler spread.

### **DUNN COUNTY**

**Colfax** – Bob Michelson, DNR West Central Region wildlife supervisor, reported conditions this morning were excellent. There was light snow cover, comfortable temperatures and it was calm. Hunting conditions were very good. It clouded up in the afternoon, but no rain. People working registration were saying deer were coming in a little ahead of normal, because it was relatively warm and they wanted to get their deer to the processor. Everyone he spoke with reported seeing lots of deer. They were registering a lot of older bucks, including several that would be mounted.

**Knapp** – Lynn at Knapp Fuel & Food had registered eight deer by 1 p.m. – six bucks and two doe. Temperatures were warm, and hunters were bemoaning that the snow on the ground was starting to disappear.

### **JUNEAU COUNTY**

**Lyndon Station** – Hunters were doing well, with more than 40 bucks and 28-plus does registered by 1:15 p.m. at the Lyndon Hardware Sporting Goods and Laundry Station. The person handling registrations said she had explained tagging requirements and reassured a number of hunters who weren't certain they had used the proper tags for the deer they brought in to register.

**New Lisbon** – DNR hunter safety administrator Tim Lawhern said: “I am seeing absolutely perfect hunting weather. There's tracking snow, I am hearing lots of shooting. At the stations I visited, registrations starting already. I am seeing lots of deer on the hoof and in vehicles going to get registered. Hunter spirits high – everyone I talk to is happy and excited. This is absolutely THE perfect day to go deer hunting. Good visibility. If I could send a message to deer hunters today I'd say enjoy the great weather and have a good time. But remember safety basics – be absolutely sure of your target and what's behind it and remember safe gun handling, just like we taught you in hunter education:

TAB-K: Treat every gun as if it was loaded. Always point your gun in a safe direction. Be sure of your target and beyond. Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard area until you are ready to shoot.”

## **LA CROSSE COUNTY**

**West Salem** – Lori Anderson at Neshonoc Sports said 21 bucks and six does had been registered by 11 a.m., including an 8-point buck a youngster had shot in his second year of deer hunting. She said hunters are seeing a “lot of deer out there.” Snow the area received earlier this week is gone, and rain was expected in the evening, she added.

## **JACKSON COUNTY**

**Black River Falls** – Carrie at the 4 Seasons Quik Stop said the employee crew there had registered 104 deer by 2:15 p.m., including 26 with antlers having 8 points or more and one buck with a 21-inch spread. “We take Polaroids of any bucks with antlers of 8 points or more, and put the pictures up above the counter, then on the window when the wall gets full,” she said. She said hunters coming in that day were “pleased” with their hunt.

## **MARATHON COUNTY**

**Wausau** - Gina Erdman at the Sunset Store said hunters liked the mild temperatures and snow-covered ground. “Registrations have been constant,” she said late this morning. Weather is expected to become a little colder tonight, she added.

## **MONROE COUNTY**

**Wyeville** – Elva at R and E Sporting said they’ve been “just swamped,” and had registered more than 200 deer by 3 p.m. with more expected. “About 75 percent were bucks,” she said. “Hunters were real happy, with many getting a deer early, bringing those deer in to register, then buying lots of bonus tags.”

## **PIERCE COUNTY**

**Ellsworth** – Jan Carlson at the Speedway Mart said 35 deer had been registered by 11 a.m., with a 50-50 split between bucks and does. “Hunters were real happy with the warm weather and snow” on the ground, she said. One woman registered a buck she had shot after seeing quite a few deer moving past her during the morning.

## **POLK COUNTY**

DNR chief conservation warden Randy Stark selects a different part of the state each year to work deer season hunting enforcement. This year in Polk Co., Stark indicated hunting conditions there early today included tracking snow and temperatures in the upper 30s. “It’s the kind of weather good for sitting,” he said. Stark said he had checked licenses on 60 to 70 hunters by early afternoon and found hunters to be optimistic and excited about the hunt and “being with family and friends.”

## **PORTAGE COUNTY**

**Rosholt** – Krystal at the Stop-N-Go Food Mart said it’s been “extremely, extremely busy” with about 300 deer registered by early afternoon, including some “really nice-sized bucks” with 12-, 10- and 8-point racks.

## **TREMPEALEAU COUNTY**

**Arcadia** – Lisa Klimek at the Express Mart burst into laughter when asked how deer registrations were going, saying cheerfully that it was “nuts this year – very busy. We have seven pick-ups out there now full of deer to register,” she said. Forty bucks and 35 doe had already been registered by 1:30 p.m., she said. “The weather has been beautiful today,” she said, adding that she expected deer registrations to stay busy much of the day.

## **VERNON COUNTY**

**Readstown** – The Kickapoo Kwik Stop had registered deer “non-stop” that day, according to one employee, who with several others was handling registrations. Seventy-four does and 49 bucks had been registered by 2 p.m., and the pace was expected to stay brisk the rest of the day.

## **WOOD COUNTY**

**Necedah** – Hunter Scott Wilhorn at the BP Supermarket said he had been on his stand near Necedah and had shot a 10-point buck by 6:40 a.m. that he brought in to register, adding that he was “plenty satisfied” with the hunt.

**Pittsville** – Melanie Droste at Harmony Co-op said 75 deer had been registered by 11 a.m., with many “nice-sized” ones and more bucks than does. Hunters were happy due to the decent weather and the deer they were seeing.